UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
LIMITED

E/ICEF/1996/P/L.16
10 November 1995

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND
Executive Board
First regular session 1996
22-26 January 1996
Item 6 of the provisional agenda*

FOR ACTION

COUNTRY PROGRAMME STRATEGY NOTE*

Argentina

SUMMARY

The Executive Director presents the country programme strategy note for Argentina for a programme of cooperation for the period 1997 to 2001.

Argentina experienced a major economic transformation during the 1990s. Although the first half of the decade saw a reduction of poverty nationally, at 21 per cent the current level of poverty is higher than in 1980. Public social expenditure, especially in the poorer provinces, is being reduced and income disparities are increasing. Argentina has achieved the majority of the year 2000 and National Plan of Action (NPA) goals. New problems affecting children and adolescents have emerged, still lacking full assessment.

The first period of cooperation (1991-1995) emphasized communication and advocacy, directed primarily to the civil society, to position children as a priority on the social agenda. This strategy, however, needs to be complemented with a greater advocacy effort. The capacity of provincial governments also requires strengthening. The incorporation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child into the National Constitution in 1994 represents a major political and social commitment to all Argentinean children. Based on this, the objective for the next country programme in Argentina will be to create awareness in Argentinean society of the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and to achieve compliance to children's rights through the reduction of social disparities as part of area-based programmes. The strategies will be advocacy directed to both Government and civil society and capacity-building through technical assistance to support provincial governments in achieving NPA goals and, in the process, implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

* E/ICEF/1996/2.

** An addendum to the present report containing the final country programme recommendation will be submitted to the Executive Board for approval at its third regular session of 1996.

THE SITUATION OF CHILDREN AND WOMEN

1. After several decades of economic stagnation, rising inflation and political instability, Argentina experienced the strengthening of democracy and major economic improvement during the 1990s. While these factors contributed to poverty reduction, at 21 per cent the current level of poverty is still three times higher than in 1980.

2. Since the beginning of 1995, however, Argentina has experienced a deep economic recession. The already high unemployment rate of 19 per cent may reach an unprecedented level for the country as well as for the Latin American region. This situation is especially serious for female heads of households. In the country's poorer provinces, reductions in budget allocations were announced recently by the Government. Income disparities are increasing. In 1994, the wealthiest 20 per cent of the population received 51 per cent of the national income, while the poorest 30 per cent of the population received only 9 per cent.

3. Argentina has overcome the major threats to children's survival and development and also has achieved the majority of the year 2000 goals and National Plan of Action (NPA) goals. However, the following NPA goals still present challenges: reduction of under-five and maternal mortality rates; water supply and sanitation; and the goal related to the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative. Reaching and sustaining those goals is associated with reducing significant disparities at provincial and local levels. Additionally, a number of problems affecting children and adolescents have emerged that reflect the growing complexity of the social situation in Argentina, and these have not yet been sufficiently assessed. Some of the problems, related to the rights of protection and participation, are violence and exploitation of children, teenage pregnancies, AIDS and drug abuse among adolescents.

4. Argentina ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990, and the Convention was incorporated into the National Constitution in 1994. In its final observations on the first report, submitted by the Government in 1994, the Committee on the Rights of the Child stated that there was a need for effective coordination for implementation of the Convention and for increased knowledge about its contents among those responsible for social policies and legislation regarding children and adolescents. The Convention, however, is still far from being addressed through social policies and practices, and national and provincial legislation have to be fully harmonized with the Convention. Hence, future UNICEF cooperation has a role to play in supporting implementation of the Convention.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM PAST COOPERATION

5. The first country programme for UNICEF in Argentina (1991-1995) was planned during a period of hyperinflation and general deterioration in the standard of living which severely affected the situation of children and adolescents. The main objective of the country programme was to position children as a priority on the social agenda and UNICEF as an agency working for Argentinean children. With limited financial resources, the strategy selected was communication and advocacy, aimed primarily at civil society and in partnership with non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Although the objective

was achieved, it was felt that this strategy needs to be complemented in the next country programme with an even more effective strategy on advocacy with governmental sectors at both national and provincial levels so that there are increased social and financial commitments to children and adolescents.

6. The success of local fund-raising as a result of the communication strategy generated an unexpectedly large volume of funds beyond the scope of the planned country programme. The pre-election situation in Argentina constrained programme preparation with the provincial governments for the implementation of programmes financed by these additional resources. However, these resources were allocated to small-scale service delivery projects implemented by NGOs. The lesson learned is that the local fund-raising strategy needs to be fully integrated into the country programme strategy so that additional resources will be utilized for priority objectives of the programme of cooperation. Through providing information on the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the UNICEF mandate and policies, a more developmental approach by local donors also will be promoted.

PROPOSED COUNTRY PROGRAMME STRATEGY

7. The national development goals related to the situation of children and adolescents in Argentina are the eradication of poverty, the reduction of social and geographical disparities, the mitigation of the consequences of rising unemployment rates and the development of a new model for social policy management. The incorporation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child into the National Constitution in 1994 represents a major political and social commitment to the survival, development, protection and participation of all Argentinean children and adolescents. Simultaneously, it reinforced the goals established in the NPA, which have now become rights for each and every child, expanding the country's vision beyond the World Summit for Children goals.

8. Based on the NPA goals and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the general objective for the next programme of cooperation will be to create awareness in Argentinean society of the contents and implications of the Convention and to increase institutional capacities to improve the situation of children and women.

9. The specific country programme objectives are (a) to create awareness about the situation of children and adolescents in Argentina, especially concerning the goals of the NPA and emerging problems; (b) to promote widespread knowledge of the Convention on the Rights of the Child; (c) to support the national and provincial governments in the process of harmonization of legislation with the Convention; and (d) to assist provincial governments in developing social programmes to improve living conditions of children and reduce social and economic disparities.

10. Those objectives will be pursued through a strategy of advocacy and public education to foster changes in terms of the knowledge, attitudes and practices of public and private organizations with respect to the rights of children. A strategy for capacity-building will include technical assistance in project design, the development of monitoring and evaluation systems, and training, mainly to support provincial governments in their efforts to achieve the NPA goals and implement the Convention. Families and community organizations will

be educated and sensitized through mass media communication and training. Their increased awareness should create a demand for compliance with children's rights. A gender equity approach will be incorporated into planning, implementation and evaluation of all programme activities.

11. Several provinces, especially in the poor northern part of the country, are still far from reaching the NPA goals and also are confronted with other problems affecting children and adolescents such as ill-treatment, sexual abuse, adolescent pregnancies, drug abuse and AIDS. This situation is aggravated by increasing unemployment.

12. UNICEF will support capacity-building to reduce disparities in provincial governments most affected by these problems and other provinces which have the political will to develop integrated, wide coverage basic services to improve social indicators for highly vulnerable children and adolescents. A principal strategy will be establishment of provincial and municipal Committees for the Defense of Children's Rights to promote solutions to the major problems of children. UNICEF, in coordination with the International Labour Organisation, also will support the design and implementation of employment programmes directed towards heads of poor households, especially women. The partners for these activities will be provincial governments and non-governmental and community organizations.

13. The lack of disaggregated data at the provincial level concerning progress towards the achievement of NPA goals and emerging problems on the one hand, and the need for information on the children's situation for advocacy with the public, on the other, are the basis for a programme of studies, monitoring and evaluation.

14. The aim will be to produce an ongoing, sustainable situation analysis on children and adolescents in Argentina based on a child rights' perspective. A major strategy is to increase Government and non-government capacities to systematically collect and analyse social statistics at national and provincial levels using relevant indicators as well as the permanent monitoring of NPA goals' attainment. It also will include research and studies to increase knowledge and create demand in the areas of special protection and participation such as child battering, drug abuse, sexual abuse, adolescent pregnancies, labour market and child labour, and AIDS. A second component of the programme is the development of monitoring and evaluation systems for interventions at the provincial level.

15. The programme of advocacy, communication and social mobilization will support the objectives of the other programmes. The strategy will include nationwide advocacy on the situation of children and adolescents and the dissemination of the contents of the Convention through the use of mass media communication, campaigns, special events and publications for the general public. The partners will be national and provincial governments, mass media and NGOs. A strategy for education on children's rights will cover children, parents and teachers through the formal school system and promote children's participation.

16. The process towards the full harmonization of national and provincial legislation with the Convention also will be supported through this programme. Strategies related to advocacy and capacity-building for accelerating compliance

with the Convention will target magistrates, court personnel, legislators and public officials who are responsible for the implementation of legal reforms and social policies concerning children and adolescents, in accordance with the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

17. Local fund-raising activities for UNICEF cooperation in Argentina have been successful and have supported supplementary-funded projects. A fund-raising strategy will be carried out through three main channels: (a) local fund-raising from civil society through campaigns and special events; (b) earnings from the Greeting Card and related Operations; and (c) resources from multilateral organizations, such as the Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank, channelled through Government-UNICEF agreements. Inter-agency cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme is based on the same cycle of cooperation and also has demonstrated successful collaboration in allocating resources for social development to the poorest provinces in the country.

ESTIMATED PROGRAMME BUDGET

Estimated programme cooperation, 1997-2001 a/
(In thousands of United States dollars)

	General resources	Supplementary funds	Total
Capacity-building for disparity reduction	2 000	10 000	12 000
Studies, monitoring and evaluation	1 000	2 000	3 000
Advocacy, communication and social mobilization	2 000	8 000	10 000
Total	5 000	20 000	25 000

a/ These are indicative figures only which are subject to change once aggregate financial data are finalized.